

America today searching her soul as never before, particularly as it relates to her dreams and goals of attaining an educated, responsible electorate.

Because....Our concept of democratic self-government pre-supposes that there is an ~~intelligent~~ intelligent, informed, involved and reasonably disciplined populace capable of self-government.

.....For attaining this end, we embarked on a course of providing free, compulsory education (ostensibly for everyone alike)

.....And generally agreed that the destiny of our Nation, and her concept of democracy, rest almost completely upon the validity, the practicability and the effectiveness of this thesis.

This system, like all other human experiments and institutions, has been subject to the Winds of Change; sometimes political, sometimes governed by economic circumstances and forces; always subject to the whims and prejudices of those in control.

(New York decentralization fight: Central Board vs Local or district Bd; Parents vs Teachers; Union power and control vs Parents; Professional vs Youth . . . every imaginable power-play that negates or overlooks the needs of disadvantaged (educationally) children)

Any honest, objective assessment of our structure of ~~professionally~~ public education, is bound to pose a number of painful questions. How can we answer?

1. Is our school system, in reality, an institution operating primarily for the gratification of (a) "The Establishment" (b) the Professional (c) the Union (d) the Parent - and their several vested interests - - or (e) the Children.....
  - (a) "...like I had in my childhood!"
  - (b) "....to enhance my professional status and image."
  - (c) "....to maintain control for the in-group and for superior bargaining position -- as well as for my position as union leader"
  - (d) "....to build into the system and its offerings, all the prejudices I have accumulated since my school days."
  - (d) "....to give me a true picture of the world to which I must adjust someday."

Or, put it another way:

2. Are our schools operating for the purpose of
  - a. Achieving physical, social or economic containment of children and the social or ethnic groups from which they come?

(an establishment tendency - vocationally oriented courses - "domestic arts" for good servants; college prep for others... unchanging and unchangeable curricula with middle-class Anglo-Saxon orientation, regardless of previous conditions of inadequate educational groundwork) - - wonderment at drop-out rates!

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- or - b. Cramming a test-measured assortment of information into youthful skulls (1) to satisfy tradition or seldom-evaluated convention; (2) to achieve successful INTEGRATION of any student into the occupational-professional-business life of the world he will encounter in later years?

(The "professional" tendency still prevails that successful teaching is best measured by certain pre-determined test results, and "citizenship" behavior, after a child's exposure to certain canned, routine and ofttime meaningless ritual.)

- or - c. Are they operating for the purpose of shaping children from various socio-economic levels and from various cultural pockets of the populace into pre-determined social caste molds, such for example as the WASP middle-class image unobtainable even for many of them

(It is almost amusing if it were not so tragic, that the most recently emerging ethnic minority group parents embrace this concept most vigorously, with an intent to exclude the more lately "arrived" minorities -- the police group of Irish-Polish-Italian young men and their anti-Puerto Rican and anti-Negro manifestations!)

- or - d. Are they operating for the purposes of aiding in the attainment of healthy growth of the physical, intellectual and emotional being of every child; by operation of an educational system in which understanding, authentic knowledge and dedication of both professional and lay leadership can enable the community to cut through acquired cultural taboos; to take the time and have the skill to search out those factors which may reveal every child's potential; to accept and adhere to a professional commitment TO ADJUST TO THE TASK OF MEETING THE CHILD'S NEEDS, rather than conform to a pre-determined professional ritual.

I submit that it will be the unusual community that can apply this total test,

honestly and courageously, and come out with a high, passing grade such as we require of the children in our care.

WHY??

Because, in Education, it has been the common, human weaknesses to:

1. Procrastinate in searching out, meeting and resolving painful, troublesome and stubborn issues ( dealing constantly with the sacred realms of precedent and tradition -- dealing constantly with the ivory-tower induced fear of and distaste for controversy, resistance to convention and authority, departure from middle-class values, standards and modes of expression.)
2. ...to continue to seek privilege or power, or both, for one's self, even when such quests negate basic rights of others; (classic example: exodus of superior teachers from difficult but challenging districts - ignoring of quieting the voice of minority protest, as means of sweeping troublesome situations under the rug.)
3. ...to demand a perfection in others which we ourselves are rarely able to achieve (emphasis upon Anglo-Saxon heritage in a milieu of Cultural Pluralism; hypocritical middle-class pretensions; ignorance of and contempt for cultural values treasured by others and completely erased for the Black - historical denials; religion; culture; social institutions & discipline; history; family; personal dignity!!!)

(Weakness in Education, to

- 4 ....to assume the existence of an unassailable infallibility of parent thought, word and action & as evidence of the miraculous Act of God which created a child, and simultaneously imparted instant wisdom in the parent, in one stroke!

...and of course, to assume an emptiness, purposelessness and malleability of our youth (shock effect of seeing High School and college youth graduate from childish pranks to seething revolt and activism!)

- 5....and, fatalistically, to accept the fantasy of infallibility of "the Establishment" in determining what is Education; what kind of system should be ours; what it shall offer, to whom and how; who will ~~pay~~ pay for it, and how much (Boards of Education, whether appointed or elected, traditionally have been the voice of the WASP community, presenting the political views, the ethnic taboos, the racial pre-judgments of the WASP community - with little opposition or serious attempts at their enlightenment by the Professional)

Examine objectively if you will and can!

1. A comparison of educational developments as between the schools of

Central City, Suburbia, Exurbia and Rural New Jersey and America, in light of /the several criteria by which school performance is measured:

- a. In modernity and efficiency of physical equipment
- b. In freshness and meaningfulness of curriculum development
- c. In student-teacher ratios
- d. In quality and practicability of extra-curricular programs
- e. In school-parent relationships on a continuing basis
- f. In provision of special teaching services for troubles or laggard pupils
- g. In research and development explorations by a dynamic school administration

What kind of performance graph could you envision in a four-way application of these criteria

If this chart be valid, where do we

find the greatest need for superior performance?

Perhaps another yardstick of performance efficacy would be thorough review of (a) drop-outs (b) college admissions (c) movement after secondary school into occupational pursuits - this has been done, but so infrequently and remotely, that little application to our annual "production rate" carries over into our self-evaluation, if any.

Actually, I submit, any such regular and objective Assessment would disclose sharply and clearly the tendency toward re-inforcement of the intellectual and social aristocracy in the American community which is based largely upon caste, race and skin-color

2. Then too, we might examine critically the matter of teacher preparation, assignment, administrative assistance, encouragement or discouragement, salaries, latitude provided for imaginative and creative work, and the rewards and promotions for distinguished service in trying situations.

I fear that a careful study here would disclose that which is a far cry from the purported professional dedication we would like to see.

(Here again, the quest for privilege almost inevitably results in the siphoning off the most experienced, the most promising, the most imaginative and courageous, the most patient and perceptive teachers, into districts where economic and social privilege already prevail, leaving the marginal, the untested, the temporary substitute and the indifferent "job-holder" to serve those areas and those children that require the very best our schools have to offer)

I think I should back up a bit and provide some insight into the background out of which come these critical observations. - not the criticism of an anti-Establishmentarian, or a cynic, or an embittered parish!!! - - -

....But rather, the conclusions of (a) a product of the system, (b) a parent and grandparent watching the undeviating course being followed (c) a professional in community organization and in race-relations, with many years of confrontation with spokesmen and banner carriers for your profession, and (d) most of all, as a one-time refugee from the black race.

(d) my youth - Amer.Hist..Eng.Hist..Anc.Hist (with Rome & England predominating) ..European Hist (ditto)... my only knowledge of me: slaves in chains - asleep on a cotton bale or dancing a jig - "the 5 races of mankind".....

White and the colored minority

Re-emergence into the black world...educational influences of the community... anger, frustration,disillusionment

Attention to my children and my fellow-black's children/ year, after year, after year

"Desegregation" of N.J. Schools, 1963 - Re-segregation of N.J. schools 1969.

Experiences to which millions of American kids being exposed; Negro, Puerto Rican, Mex-Amer. Indian Aleut, Eskimo

With this subjective but factual background montage, then look at the current ferment in the world of Higher Education - the University Student in revolt, both black and white (color does not necessarily obscure the reaction to hypocrisy, stupidity, stand-pat-ism, intellectual atrophy.)

"Comxy inspired" vs High Jinx? Last of the world's students to become involved - to question the direction they are being taken.

How much of this activist ferment is:

1. Primitive, childish rejection of "authority" and "father image."
2. Rejection of hypocritical ritualism of an order of society that manifestly has failed to live by its own rules
3. Disorganized or confused, or subtly controlled, attempt to spur the profession and its lay overseers into re-assessment, re-direction and/or re-emphasis of Educational methodology, and goal, to meet the severe demands being made by a rapidly changing world.

Before coming to a close I would wish you to take a more intimate look at the Black parent, and his attitude toward the school and its professionals:

Current protest just an organized manifestation of that which has prevailed on an individual plane for years - generations....

...Communication between black parent and school teacher and administrator almost invariably on the level of complaint and punitive action.

The polite, but long-range remedial relationship of suburban PTA rarely prevails in the racial slum

Like Police and community relations, the black citizen and the teacher are more nearly adversaries than teammates in a common enterprise.

Whose fault? Whose initiative to correct? The answer lies in the almost too simplistic evaluation of which possesses the greater awareness and insights, the better preparation and understanding, the more potent power to evoke change, the more carefully acquired skills through which to establish a non-existent rapport; the black, ~~uneducated~~ poverty-stricken, powerless, frustrated parent, or college trained, dedicated professional.

In this area of thought, we can and will find the most glaring examples of our failures to educate teachers and the general public, providing them with the understanding, objectivity, authentic information in the place of gossip and rumor, and the ability to inculcate into generations of young America the true intent of our national guidelines.

(Abysmal ignorance of this oldest of immigrants!!!!. "reception Comm at Plymouth Rock and all succeeding white immigrants...

they who, according to our historical record and literature:

1. did not pioneer or explore;
2. did not defend the flag, ever;
3. did not help open the West;
4. did not invent, create, labor;
5. did not develop intellectually and morally
6. did not contribute, except to relief loads.

"They do not want Education" or worse "You can't educate them".....

but how many know

1931-2	1943-4	1943-4	1951 College	
208	580	G.of Oper	...	Yet
118 - 24	225 - 70	198	11,780	6,000 =
		85 - 45	4800	90M., now
			4600	300M
			2200	

Still today...they who need most, get least".....apathy, resistance, misinterpretation in the white world, giving rise to blind, negative-oriented separation in sections of the black community....all leading to polarisation and more turmoil.

Not a pretty picture as to the nature of Education's contribution to attainment of our democratic ideals. What do you think